

## Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge Grant – Year 4, Fourth Quarter Update



### Local Early Childhood Councils - Project 1

#### Key Achievements –

- Local ECACs were offered a new grant opportunity to apply for the Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework: *Maryland's Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children* (Local Parent Engagement) Kellogg Foundation Grant. Grant funds will provide support for assisting parents to be informed and engaged in children's learning by assuring a family "voice" is included in the operation and decision making of Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils.

#### Summary of Activities –

- Each local council has successfully completed and is closing out their RTT-ELC Implementation Grant. Local ECACs have met or exceeded goals, objectives, and activities stated within their grant action plan.

#### Improved School Readiness –

- Each Local ECAC is studying their KRA results and strategically designing next steps towards closing the achievement gap.

This project was completed as of December 31, 2015.

### Maryland EXCELS/Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) - Project 2

#### Key Achievements –

- The number of programs with published quality ratings in Maryland EXCELS has grown to 2,817 and exceeds the number of non-published programs for the first time since full implementation. Since September, 673 additional programs published quality ratings in EXCELS.

#### Summary of Activities –

- Program bonuses, funded by the ELC Grant, are ending on 12/31/15. Efforts are underway to identify alternative sources of funding for bonuses. In the last two months of the reporting period, there was an increase in the number of programs moving to higher levels in the TQRIS. Over 25% of published programs are at Levels 2, 3, 4, and 5. December's data shows the highest number (163) of programs published at Level 5 since full implementation. The total number of published programs has increased 24% from the last reporting period.
- Tiered Reimbursement/Quality Differential Payments – there are 392 programs with published quality ratings of Level 3, 4, or 5 who are eligible for differential reimbursement payments for Child Care Subsidy; 87 more than the last reporting period. Quality payments range from 10% to 44% per child, depending upon the age of the child, the program type, and the program's quality rating.
- The requirement for Child Care Subsidy providers to participate in Maryland EXCELS became effective on June 29, 2015. Programs must publish a quality rating within 12

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months of their acceptance into the TQRIS and renew their rating, or publish higher, within 12 months of their published expiration date. Programs are considered non-participating if these requirements are not met. When a program's status in the TQRIS is changed from participating to non-participating, the program may meet the requirements of EXCELS by publishing a rating to renew their participation. Providers not previously participating in Maryland EXCELS may participate at any time by registering and submitting an application at [www.marylandexcels.org](http://www.marylandexcels.org).

- Outreach and support continues to be provided through the network of Quality Assurance Specialists and the Child Care Resource and Referral Centers, who hold regional trainings and workgroup meetings to assist providers with Maryland EXCELS. Quality Assurance staff present at all state and local early childhood and school-age conferences to educate providers about the TQRIS.
- Online professional development modules on the Maryland EXCELS system and the rationale between the standards and continuous quality improvement are in development.

### Improved School Readiness –

- Maryland EXCELS requires programs to create Program Improvement Plans at Levels 3, 4, and 5 to address school readiness components from statewide or local data on the KRA available at <http://www.readyatfive.org/school-readiness-data/jurisdictional-readiness-data-2015.html>.
- When the enrollment and attendance reporting system (Project 10) reaches full implementation, students will be tracked from their child care and early education placement(s), linking their early experiences with the KRA assessment results. This data will yield information about the link between program quality and kindergarten readiness.

## Coaching and Mentoring – Project 3

### ***Breakthrough Centers***

#### Key Achievements –

- Over 922 child care providers/programs worked with Center staff and enrolled in Maryland EXCELS; Breakthrough Centers are located in CCRCs.
- The Centers provided technical assistance and capacity building services to child care programs/providers that were in the 412 Title I School Improvement Areas throughout Maryland. These programs include English Language Learners, children with special needs and behavior concerns.

#### Summary of Activities –

- Many child care programs received quality technical assistance, and earned Core of Knowledge and Pre-Service Training hours to meet the staff professional development requirements for Maryland EXCELS.

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- The CCRCs provided training and the overview for the new Developmental Screenings to meet the Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Practice (DAP) in the Maryland EXCELS Program Standards.

### Improved School Readiness –

- When the online attendance system is fully implemented, MSDE will be able track programs in EXCELS, and their students' performance on the KRA.

This project was completed as of December 31, 2015.

### ***Community Hubs***

#### Key Achievements –

- Two Community Hubs were created under the ELC grant, both located in Baltimore City. Each Community Hub facilitates the transition for each child to a Head Start program when the child turns three years old.
- Community Outreach Specialists (CCOS) have worked with over 55 child care providers by providing training and technical assistance in the Park Heights and Cherry Hill communities to increase their participation in the EXCELS program. By June 30, 2015, over 20 providers were registered at a Level 1 and an additional 10 providers at a Level 2.

#### Summary of Activities –

- The Transition Specialist worked to develop contacts and relationships with the public schools as well as community agencies to smooth transitions for families with children entering Head Start, community preschool programs, and Pre-K.
- Hubs worked hand in hand with Early Head Start programs targeting pregnant women, infants and toddlers and their families. Supports were provided through referrals to various resources in the community, sharing parent education opportunities, and offering child development information through home visiting services.

### Improved School Readiness –

- School readiness was improved through working with families and service providers to ensure smooth transitions for those children turning three and transitioning to Head Start programs or community programs as well as those children entering public and private Pre-K programs.

This project was completed as of December 31, 2015.

### ***Preschool for All***

This project is closed, and the participating community based PreK programs were transferred to the federal Preschool Development Grant beginning July 1, 2015.

### ***Judy Center Satellites***

This project is closed, and the five Judy Centers funded by ELC grant were transferred to the federal Preschool Development Grant beginning July 1, 2015.

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### *Making Access Happen (MAH)*

#### Key Achievements –

- MAH online “toolkit” for reflective coaches previewed December 9, 2015 at a statewide leadership meeting for local school system (LSS) Directors of Special Education, LSS Preschool Special Education Coordinators, Local Infants and Toddlers Program Directors, and other external partners and advocates. The initial launch of the toolkit will highlight challenging behaviors, the most frequently identified barrier to maintaining children with disabilities in inclusive community-based early childhood programs.

#### Summary of Activities –

- The MAH team, comprised of JHU/SOE and MSDE staff, holds monthly leadership meetings to review the status of local program implementation of the reflective coaching model approach, based on the work of Sheldon and Rush. The team addresses challenges faced by local implementation teams and jointly develops strategies to address them. The focus for the final reporting quarter has been on assisting local programs with planning for sustaining local efforts beyond the grant funding period.

#### Improved School Readiness –

- Least Restrictive Environment data available from the two most recent years of statewide reporting show that the percentage of preschool children participating in inclusive early childhood settings has increased. These data are collected annually in October: October 2013/October 2014: 3 year-olds, 35.43% to 38.79%; 4 year-olds, 49.13% to 51.74%; 5 year-olds, 63.75%/66.72%. Particularly for 3 year-olds this increase is significant. Increased access to general education early childhood programs, curricula and instruction is the first critical step towards narrowing the school readiness gap for children with disabilities.

## Promoting Use of Early Learning Standards- Project 4

### *PEEP*

#### Key Achievements –

- The first year of full scale implementation of the PEEP STEM curriculum and data collection took place in the 2014-2015 school year and concluded with post study data collection in June of 2015. The second year of full scale implementation and data collection began in October 2015. An additional 58 early childhood programs signed up to participate in the professional development for PEEP. Twenty-four of these programs are participating in the research component on the effectiveness of PEEP over the next year. Teachers will implement the 6 PEEP units through May 2016 and post data collection will occur at the end of May and beginning of June.
- Assessment and implementation data collected from the first implementation will be analyzed over the next few months with a report issued by April 2016. Year 2 data will be combined with Year 1 and analyzed following the post data collection window in June 2106.

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### Summary of Activities –

- The second year of full scale implementation began with two days of professional development focused on science and *PEEP* on October 12 and 13, 2015. Teachers are now implementing the *PEEP* units over the next six months and will facilitate children’s science explorations with coaching support from their administrator.

### Improved School Readiness –

- As part of this statewide early childhood STEM initiative, an evaluation is being conducted by the MSDE, Division of Early Childhood Development, to examine how the intentional implementation of *PEEP* supports science teaching and learning across the state, and reinforces practices outlined in the STEM guidelines. The evaluation of *PEEP* will allow us to assess the efficacy and impact of intentional science curriculum implementation on the development of scientific thinking during the preschool years. MSDE will also utilize the new state Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and follow the *PEEP* children and comparison group children (those children in classrooms that did not implement the curriculum) into Kindergarten to examine differences in kindergarten readiness.

### **Guide to Pedagogy**

This project was completed in September 2015. See the Third Quarter Update for details.

### **VIOLETS**

#### Key Achievements –

- VIOLETS new teacher and VIOLETS Booster and Extension Trainings were offered regionally for 73 participants.
- An evaluation of VIOLETS was completed, demonstrating higher gains in receptive language skills among English Language Learners.

#### Summary of Activities –

- VIOLETS Extension Bags, with four new books and VIOLETS scripts and activities, were created and disseminated to 53 VIOLETS teachers.

#### Improved School Readiness –

- The VIOLETS Evaluation demonstrates that participating in the VIOLETS program can help children make gains in two types of vocabulary words, and that children who are Dual Language Learners (DLL) tended to make greater gains to help close the gaps between DLLs and their English-proficient peers.

### **PETALS:**

#### Key Achievements –

- The research and design underpinnings of PETALS have been established.
- Books have been chosen for use with PETALS, including informational and narrative texts.
- The majority of PETALS books will be available either bilingually, or in English and Spanish versions.

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- PETALS will incorporate a strong family engagement component.

### Summary of Activities –

- The Internal Advisory group met to review and provide feedback on the PETALS prototypes, which are currently in development.
- An evaluation of existing language and vocabulary evaluation tools began.

### Improved School Readiness –

- PETALS is targeted toward children ages 2-3 who are DLLs or have low expressive language. Based on the successful VIOLETS model, extending PETALS to a younger age group will allow for targeted programming to begin the process of a child’s language development even earlier.

### ***Early Learning Standards***

This project was completed in September 2015. See the Third Quarter Update for details.

### **Professional Development Maryland Model for School Readiness - Project 5**

This project is closed, and professional development will continue under Project 6 – Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and the Early Learning Assessment.

### **Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) – Project 6**

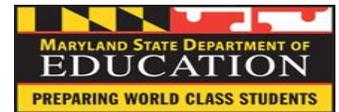
The Ready For Kindergarten (R4K) assessment system has been systematically developed within a framework grounded in theory, research, and best practice to ensure its validity and reliability. The reporting scale of both the formative assessments and the KRA will allow the progress of individual students to be tracked within and across school years and allow cohorts to be tracked across years. Maryland’s current assessment system includes a kindergarten entry assessment, and formative assessments for children aged 36 through 72 months, i.e., Early Learning Assessment. Combined, these two assessment components can provide key stakeholders—families/caregivers, educators, administrators, and policymakers—with a balanced view of students’ learning needs and provide actionable information to help tailor instruction and interventions. The KRA and the formative assessments are part of an overall educational system that includes early learning and development standards, curricular resources and instructional practices, professional development, and instructional interventions and policy improvements. The system has been designed to enhance the school-readiness skills of entering kindergarten students and ensure that students are on a learning trajectory to graduate from high school ready for college and careers.

### ***Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)***

#### Key Achievements –

- KRA v1.5 was administered in the fall of 2015 with an assessment window opening date of August 17, 2015. Teachers across the state of Maryland assessed every entering

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kindergarten student through November 1, 2015. Professional development modules providing teachers with a refresh training on administration of the KRA was available in the summer 2015.

- A Technical Report that provides detailed information on the development of the KRA, including reliability and validation of the assessment was finalized in 2015.
- After census administration, all KRA items were evaluated for their difficulty, discrimination (i.e., item-total correlation), and internal consistency. The internal structure of the KRA was examined using a common psychometric analysis procedure to obtain an estimate of the reliability or a measure of the extent the items on the KRA measure the same construct. Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) provides an internal consistency estimate of the assessment, which is based on the correlation between each test item with other test items to form one construct. Generally, the alpha increases when the correlation between test items increases. The KRA is a low-stakes assessment, used to inform instruction, support and intervention, and policy. The KRA results are not used to prohibit a child from entering kindergarten or for high-stakes decisions. However, as Table 1 shows, that the inter-correlations among KRA assessment items were strong. The Alpha of .94 for the KRA overall is considered in the “Excellent” range and alpha’s by domain are considered “Good” or “Excellent” ranging from .78 for Mathematics to .91 for Social Foundations.

**Table 1:**

	<u>Cronbach’s Alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</u>	<u>Internal Consistency</u>
KRA Overall	.94	Excellent (High-stakes testing)
Language & Literacy	.82	Good (Low-stakes testing)
Mathematics	.78	Good (Low-stakes testing)
Social Foundations	.91	Excellent (High-stakes testing)
Physical Well-Being & Motor Development	.81	Good (Low-stakes testing)

Internal Consistency Ranges: < 0.50=Unacceptable; 0.50 to 0.60=Poor; 0.60 to 0.70=Acceptable; 0.70 to 0.90=Good (Low-stakes testing);  $\geq$  0.90=Excellent (High-stakes testing);

### Summary of Activities –

- The window for the second year of administration of the Kindergarten Readiness (KRA) opened on August 17, 2015. Teachers across the state of Maryland assessed every entering kindergarten student through November 1, 2015. Professional development modules providing teachers with a refresh training on administration of the KRA was available in the summer 2015.
- John’s Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education (JHU-CTE), with state input, developed a survey to gather feedback from teachers in Maryland after census administration of the KRA v1.0. The data from this survey was analyzed and provided the basis for item content review, and further development and modification of the existing technology and professional development content to support the administration of KRA v1.5 in the fall of 2015. In addition, a workgroup of Maryland

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kindergarten teachers from the original focus group and additional kindergarten teachers recommended by the Maryland State Education Association met to provide additional feedback and suggestions to improve the efficiency and administration of the KRA v.1.5. During the summer of 2015, meetings were held with Maryland school system Local Accountability Coordinators and Data Managers to communicate the improvements being made to KRA 1.0 and to provide technical assistance.

- The data and feedback gathered from the administration of KRA v1.0 in the fall of 2014 provided the basis for significant enhancements and expanded functionality of the technology systems to support administration of KRA v1.5 in the fall of 2015. Similar to the technology infrastructure utilized in the support and administration of the KRA v1.0 in Maryland and Ohio, the improved system includes an online reporting system (ORS), teacher dashboards and customized professional development, and a virtual performance assessment (VPA), i.e., items that can be performed by a student using touchscreen technology for immediate scoring. The Ready for Kindergarten Online is the enterprise system for KRA v1.5 data collection, user management, reporting, and professional development. The website is used by teachers to browse the assessment items and supporting materials, enter assessment scores and comments for each child, and access embedded professional development dashboards and reports. The Ready for Kindergarten Online provides secure access for teachers to enter student performance data and teacher observational data. Accessible via desktop computer, laptop, or tablet, the Ready for Kindergarten Online system allows for data import and export. User dashboards and reports support state-, district-, school-, classroom, and student-level data reporting and analysis. Customizable views and reports can be created for families, teachers, and administrators at the school, district, or state levels. Specific improvements for the administration of KRA v1.5 in the fall of 2015 included the following:
  - Newly updated KRA App including 17 items plus a tutorial/practice item
  - Supports for the KRA App and a walk through of the Ready for Kindergarten Online
  - Information and resources for the KRA Score Reports
  - Printable KRA 1.5 Score Sheet for 2015
  - Dashboard access to student assessment results for immediate use by teachers
  - Individual Student Reports and Parent Reports available directly within the system in November.
  - Parent Individual Student Report available in multiple languages in November: English, Spanish, Chinese, French
  - More than one teacher can be assigned to a student within the system to enter data on behalf of that child. The last score for each assessment item entered at the close of the assessment window is what counts for reporting.
  - Each assessment item defaults to *Needs to be Administered* in order to assist teachers with keeping track of student data and which assessment items are complete

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- Print Score Sheet feature populates the student names on the score sheet.
- One spreadsheet feature for the entire assessment where scores are auto-saved each time a score is entered. Assists with speed of data entry to reduce teacher burden and also addresses issues of connectivity.
- In addition to the improvements described above, the JHU-CTE Technology Team also implemented a User Acceptance Test (UAT) prior to the administration for KRA v1.5. During the UAT stakeholders (kindergarten teachers and school system data managers) tested the technology and software to make sure it could handle required tasks in real-world scenarios, and according to specifications. A total of 25 teachers, 17 from Maryland and eight from Ohio, and four data managers, two from each state, participated in the UAT. Teachers tested the teacher interface that collects the student KRA scores as well as the KRA App in which the student interacts to complete a portion of the assessment items via technology. Data managers tested the data manager interface for manual and bulk loading teacher, student, and enrollment data. After testing the technology, teachers and data managers answered a number of questions regarding their experience with the system. Feedback and issues were categorized based on system bugs, system enhancements, and assessment content changes. System bugs were replicated and fixed prior to the system launching. Enhancements were prioritized based on their need, usefulness, and complexity. Some enhancements were made prior to the launch of KRA v1.5. Other system enhancements and assessment content changes will be considered for the next round of development for the next system implementation version (KRA v2.0).
- Based on the data and feedback gathered from the administration of KRA v1.0 and the UAT, the following improvements were made for the professional development to support administration of KRA v1.5 in the fall of 2015:
  - New teacher Observation Planning Guide that is aligned to the Teacher Administration Manual and observation videos for observation practice,
  - New resources for integrating administration of the KRA throughout the kindergarten day,
  - Teacher Tips for administering the KRA,
  - Updated Universally Designed Allowances with supporting activities and resources
  - Updated Guidelines document and corresponding activities and resources in supporting individual children,
  - Supports for the KRA App and a walk through of the Ready for Kindergarten Online System
  - Information and resources for the KRA score reports,
  - Item-by-item supports for the administration of all KRA items,
  - Additional domain-specific resources for supporting the essential skills, knowledge, or behaviors for the Common Language Standards,

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- Proctor guidelines for teachers working with trained instructional assistants or paraprofessionals to monitor students accessing r KRA App items in their classroom were created for the KRA 1.5,
- Updated Teacher Administration Manual for the Blind and Visually Impaired including foam and tactile manipulatives.

### Improved School Readiness –

- The R4K, which includes the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), provides a framework to assess what students should know and be able to do when they enter kindergarten to ensure they are ready to learn. The KRA provides data that teachers can use to identify learning gaps and ensure quality early learning opportunities for children by building on the strengths of every child.
- The KRA results represent an incoming kindergarten student’s set of skills and behaviors as expressed in the Composite Score. The subset of skills and behaviors are research based and have been defined as critical for being ready for school and comprise such skills across four domains of learning – Language/Literacy, Mathematics, Social Foundations, and Physical Development. This means that a kindergartener must demonstrate these skills and behaviors for all the four domains in order to reach a composite score that represents “demonstrating readiness.” A student who has not yet demonstrated those skills in one of the domains has either a composite score of “approaching” or “emerging” readiness.
- A first KRA state report on school readiness for children entering kindergarten in 2014 – 2015 has been released and supplemented by a technical report. The technical report provides detailed information on the development of the KRA, including reliability and validation of the assessment. Based on the 2014-2015 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results, nearly half (47%) of all children in Maryland displayed the foundational skills assessed in 2014 – 2015 indicating they were fully ready for kindergarten. More than a third (36%) were approaching readiness. Only 17% of children were assessed as emerging. The school readiness report for school year 2015-2016 will be available online at [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org) and at [www.readyatfive.org](http://www.readyatfive.org) late winter 2016.

### **Early Learning Assessment (ELA)**

#### Key Achievements –

- The learning progressions and tasks for the ELA have been completed, and will be ready in time for training of local program staff, both general education and special education teachers, after January 2016. The ELA materials will be available to teachers in the form of a kit available through the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development.
- The technology to support administration of the ELA has been finalized as part of the assessment system infrastructure.
- The feedback received from the census administration of KRA v1.0 required many changes and enhancements be made to prepare for the implementation of KRA v1.5.

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The time and staffing necessary to implement these changes and enhancements required the leadership teams from both Maryland and Ohio to make tough decisions regarding the final development and deployment of the ELA. The roll-out of the ELA, therefore, was delayed. The professional development for the special education Training of Trainers (ToT) was conducted from August through October, 2015, and consisted of 3 days of face-to-face training. The professional development at the district level for special education teachers will consist of 2 days of training (face-to-face or blended) with three days of instructional support provided by the trainers, and will be completed by May 2016. The 2016-2017 school year will be a pilot year for the administration of the ELA to preschool children with disabilities, with revisions based on teacher feedback to be incorporated into the ELA for a full rollout projected for the following school year (2017-2018). ToTs for general education teachers, including public school general educators, and child care providers, will take place beginning in January 2016. Then there will be a phased rollout of district level training based on expressed interest in use of the ELA.

### Child Development Innovations – Project 7

#### ***Best Beginnings***

This project is closed as it was completed in September 2015. See the Third Quarter Update for details. The Best Beginnings tool is available free to providers through this link until January 15, 2016: <http://mptchildcarecourses.thinkport.org/dev-screening-tool-review-and-application-2.html>

#### ***Developmental Screening***

Summary of Activities –

- The regulation requiring all child care providers to use developmental screens is now expected to be promulgated on July 1, 2017. This change will allow the Division of Special Education/Intervention Services more time to prepare for a potential increase in referrals and services. The free tools are available through January 15, 2016 and the online training is free through December of 2016 (see link above).
- Child care providers have begun taking face-to-face or free, online training on Developmental Screening Overview. The free online training launched in June and through the month of December: a total of 8,674 providers enrolled, 6,063 certificates have been issued.
- Child care providers are also selecting their developmental screening tool; as of January 6, 2016 the following tools have been selected: 3,479 ASQ-3 Print version, 207 ASQ-3 Online version, 180 Best Beginnings Developmental Screen, 449 Brigance Early Childhood Screen, 82 ESI-R, and 90 Speed DIAL-4.

Improved School Readiness –

- Developmental screenings will assist in identifying children with special needs earlier and provide them with necessary services to prepare them for Kindergarten.

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### ***Training of Pediatricians***

#### Key Achievements –

- Collected and coded stakeholder interviews to determine training needs and preferences.
- Provided training and curriculum for mental health professionals to support pediatric PCP's.
- Held cross disciplinary training in four regions of the state around early childhood mental health, 145 various providers attended

#### Summary of Activities –

- BHIPP has enrolled 522 providers for training in children's mental health issues.
- Provided mental health phone consultation for pediatric PCP's Statewide, a total of 107 consults were for children 0-5.
- B-HIPP Reflections Video completed,  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v\\_muCLmaFzE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_muCLmaFzE)

#### Improved School Readiness –

- In 2014-2015, 50% of Kindergarteners demonstrated proficient skills and behaviors in the Social Foundations domain on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. By providing the medical community with supports needed to improve the social and emotional health of young children, school readiness for many children is enhanced.

This project is completed.

### ***Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (SEFEL)***

#### Key Achievements –

- Continued to update and add to SEFEL Website,  
<https://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/SEFEL/>.
- Posted two additional Trauma informed SEFEL Trainings.
- Began pilot outcomes monitoring section of website with two counties.

#### Summary of Activities –

- 12 SEFEL Leadership Committee Meetings have been held to help guide and support the updating of the web site.
- 158 Providers have obtained certificates in SEFEL Preschool Training or the SEFEL Infant and Toddler Training.
- Participants have come from 17 States and 5 countries.

#### Improved School Readiness –

- The SEFEL website is used by 3,556 users, which is an additional 383 users over the last quarter as more providers learn of the importance of Social Foundations for later school success.

This project is completed.

## **Family Engagement and Support – Project 8**

### ***Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework and Coalition***

#### Key Achievements –

- MSDE was awarded a \$494,370 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to build upon the work accomplished under the RTT ELC Project 8: Family Engagement; notably, the establishment of *The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework: Maryland’s Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children*. The grant was awarded on September 1, 2015--August 31, 2016.
- The Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Coalition is the advisory group and steering committee that will oversee grant implementation.

#### Summary of Activities –

- Presentations on Maryland’s Early Childhood Family Engagement Initiatives were made for the Interagency Early Childhood Policy Committee at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington D.C. on October 28<sup>th</sup> and at the Maryland Head Start Association Conference on December 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The Steering Committee for the Family Engagement Initiative met on September 21<sup>st</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup> to continue the planning and implementation of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant.
- On November 17<sup>th</sup>, a Family Engagement Kick-off Event was held to highlight the accomplishments of the Family Engagement Initiative as well as discuss the next steps of Family Engagement with the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

#### Improved School Readiness –

- As providers move up the levels in Maryland EXCELS, the amount of family engagement (written and oral communication, parent-teacher conferences, family events, written shared polices, etc.) expected of licensed providers increases. As of September 2015, 53% of Maryland’s licensed child care providers were participating in Maryland EXCELS.

### ***Coalition - Effective Practices Toolkit***

#### Key Achievements –

- The Early Childhood Family Engagement Coalition developed a plan for the Effective Practices Toolkit to support the *Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework* which helps child care providers increase and improve family engagement practices with their families.

#### Summary of Activities –

- Met with the subcommittee for the Toolkit on October 29<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The subcommittee is working to ensure that the toolkit will be aligned with documents such as the Workforce Competencies Framework and the Guide to Pedagogy. The toolkit design will incorporate *Framework* goals and offer examples that illustrate different agencies and programs that are meeting these goals. Additionally, there are examples

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from parents and educators for activities that have been successful for increasing Family Engagement.

- The subcommittee is also working to include information on pertinent topics for educators such as Toxic Stress and Trauma, Dual Language Learners, and working with families with children with disabilities.

### Improved School Readiness –

- By developing the Effective Practices Toolkit, providers will have tools and resources to strengthen and improve relationships with the families of the children in their care. By working together, families will receive valuable information on being their child's first teacher and advocate, and providers will be better informed about the development of children through parent interaction.

### ***Parent Cafes***

#### Key Achievements –

- The goals for this project have been completed. In 2015, there were a total of 37 Parent Cafés provided (far exceeding their goal of 24) throughout Maryland with 522 people attending.
- By training an additional 56 Parent Café Facilitators, Maryland Family Network (MFN) was able to further increase the capacity for the provision of Parent Cafés.

#### Summary of Activities –

- In January and in June, MFN held Parent Café Facilitator Training Institute with 54 people completing the training, preparing them to facilitate Parent Cafés and train Table Hosts for Parent Cafés.
- During the second quarter, of the 218 people attending Parent Cafés and completing evaluations, 99% said attending the Parent Café was helpful to them, 96% said that will be more willing to ask for help when needed. Additionally, 86% said they plan to change something about their parenting, 93% said they plan to try to understand their children's feelings more, and 97% said they would attend another Parent Café.

#### Improved School Readiness –

- By increasing awareness of child development, school readiness, and available community resources, parents are better informed to help their children increase the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school. Evaluations completed by participants after each Parent Café show parents find support through their peers, more easily access community resources, and gain an increased understanding of their child's development.

This project is completed.

### **Library Learning Councils:**

#### Key Achievements -

- Public libraries have organized Library Learning Cafes in 18 libraries to bring in families to network on early childhood topics in Title I school districts and to receive information on valuable early childhood and family resources.

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### Summary of Activities -

- As of December 2015, 28 Library Parent Cafés have been held and 16 libraries have created Family Resource/Parent Information Centers.

### Improved School Readiness-

- The Library Partnership has improved the quality of parents' interactions with library staff; increased the frequency of children and families' engagement with libraries, including obtaining library cards for children; and encouraged families to take greater advantage of other social services in their communities.

This project is completed.

### ***Learning Parties***

#### Key Achievements –

- 45 sets of Learning Parties were held in 27 different programs over the course of the grant, including child care programs, public PreK programs, Judy Centers, libraries, and a homeless shelter, meeting the goal established through RTT-ELC.
- All seven domains of the Learning Party curriculum have been revised to align with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.
- Through 2015, Learning Parties reached approximately 450 children and 350 adults in 13 jurisdictions.

#### Summary of Activities –

Learning Parties were held in 6 different domains.

- Development began for a Learning Party Train of Trainers to help build regional teams of Learning Party trainers throughout the state.
- Five regional Learning Party trainings were held in 2015, reaching over 110 participants.
- Learning Party School Readiness Cards were revised and redesigned.
- Learning Party parent evaluations were revised and updated in both English and Spanish.

#### Improved School Readiness –

Families exposed to the Learning Parties have a greater understanding of the importance of early learning as the foundation for school readiness and success in school. Family Engagement is a critical component of school readiness, and Learning Parties are an effective tool for family engagement. Parent evaluations completed at the end of the Learning Parties indicate that families had increased awareness of the importance of early learning and their roles as their child's first teacher.

This project is completed.

### ***Raising A Reader***

#### Key Achievements –

- The third year of the Raising A Reader (RAR), a family engagement and early literacy initiative, is now being implemented. Approximately 2,500 prekindergarten students in over 50 Title I schools are participating in nine school districts in Maryland. Spanish-speaking students make up 22% of the children in the program. There has been an

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increase of nearly 300 students at four additional schools that have implemented RAR for the first time this school year.

- Schools have completed the orientation or kick-off activity for parents. Students are taking books home in a red bag each week to engage their parents in book sharing activities.

### Improved School Readiness –

- An analysis of the two year's results of parent pre and post surveys (latest results available at this time) indicate a significant increase in the time spent with parents reading with their children and children being active participants in the book sharing process. The book sharing behaviors that had a significant increase include children choosing the book to read, turning pages in a book, asking questions about a book, and helping by "reading" or telling a story using the pictures.

### ***Reach Out And Read***

This project was completed in September 2015. See the Third Quarter Update for details.

## Workforce Competency and Leadership Development- Project 9

### ***Workforce Competency Framework***

This project was completed in September 2015. See the Third Quarter Update for details.

### ***MAAPP***

#### Key Achievements –

- Candidates for Cohort 1 have completed the program. Nine of the eleven candidates have satisfactorily met all requirements for MAAPP. They have completed or will soon complete the state application for early childhood certification. Support is being provided to two candidates to determine what assistance is needed.
- In Cohort 2 twelve candidates successfully finished year two (residency) of MAAPP in December. They will be working to finalize any outstanding paperwork and other requirements necessary for certification. Assistance is being provided to candidates that need support.
- The 17 candidates in Cohort 3 have just completed year one of MAAPP. They recently finished their internship in a public school setting and have submitted their final seminar portfolios for review. The teachers are now beginning the residency (year two) of the program and will submit their initial instructional videos for feedback by February.

#### Improved School Readiness –

- Nine candidates from Cohort 1 have completed or will soon complete the state application for early childhood certification and are waiting for confirmation from Educator Effectiveness Division at MSDE.
- Cohort 2 and 3 candidates have enhanced their knowledge of early childhood education through the successful completion of MAAPP classes and public school internship.

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### ***Strengthening the Workforce***

#### Summary of Activities –

- During the legislative session 2015, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 677 requiring the Department, the Commission, and representatives from institutions of higher education in the State that offer early childhood education programs to develop a master plan addressing the critical shortage of qualified professional teachers and child care providers in the early childhood education workforce.

#### Improved School Readiness –

The Master Plan workgroup's recommendations will strengthen the quality of the EC workforce through these activities:

- MSDE will collaboratively plan and develop degree programs with four-year colleges to increase the number of teacher education programs that provide dual certification in special and general education in early childhood education for children from birth to grade 3;
- MSDE will develop a professional development program that emphasizes skill development and training for child care teachers working with infants and toddlers;
- MSDE will work with local school systems on the alignment of high school Career and Technology Education program in Early Childhood Education/Childcare with the requirements of the Child Development Associate credential and course content/standards alignment to the community college early childhood education programs;
- Early Learning Leadership Academies will be continued, including a focus on supporting students with disabilities (IT/Preschool Special Education); and
- A statewide job board will be established to advertise internships and paid positions designed to enhance child care providers' efforts to find qualified applicants.

### ***Early Learning Academies***

This project was completed in August 2015. See the Third Quarter Update for details.

## **Early Learning Data System – Project 10**

#### Key Achievements –

- The MSDE Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) has been developing its Early Childhood Data Warehouse (ECDW) as part of MSDE's Longitudinal Data System, with project completion expected in June 2016.
- Enhancements to the existing Child Care Administrative Tracking System (CCATS) expanded the scope of the ECDW by collecting, linking, and integrating data about children in publicly funded early childhood programs, program quality data on all types of early learning and development programs, and early childhood programs participating in the Maryland EXCELS (TQRIS) program.
- Under CCDF funding, MSDE/DECD is currently in the process of completing a basic public portal to enable certain online transactions, and this basic portal is scheduled for

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implementation in 2016. Project 10 built out the public portal functionality to allow families to apply for services, providers to accept vouchers and submit attendance for payment.

### Summary of Activities –

- DECD is in the process of testing the professional development grants and incentives module in the internal CCATS application. The professional development grant module will be fully operational and integrated with licensing, subsidy, and credentialing services by June 2016.
- The child care subsidy portal, including child attendance, voucher receipt and payment, is being tested for release in 2016.
- DECD developed the Early Childhood Data Warehouse (ECDW) as the main repository for collection, integration, and reporting of DECD data through the creation of a comprehensive database and the development and implementation of data dashboards, pre-determined data reports, and established policy queries.

### Improved School Readiness by –

- The IT systems will enable MSDE to track student performance on the KRA, analyze their prior attendance in child care and preschool, and examine the quality of the programs students attended.

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For more information:

[http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/challenge.htm](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/challenge.htm)